DDI/NFAC

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Soviet Role In Implementing Martial Law in Poland

Soviet Objectives

The Soviets had pressed the Poles to crack down on Solidarity since the fall of 1980. Pressure was applied on the Polish political and military leaders almost continuously by the senior Soviet military and political leadership. It involved threats of Soviet military intervention, Soviet encouragement (and funding) of hard-line Polish political circles, threats of Soviet economic reprisals, and lobbying with the Polish military.

Moscow's efforts were frustrated, however, as long as the Polish regime believed it could muddle through without the use of force and had hope of eventually reconstituting the Polish Party as the primary political force in Poland. In addition, the Kania regime's doubts about its ability to clamp down without initiating a bloodbath and about its ability to control its own repressive forces were perhaps the ultimate constraint. The crackdown came when the Jaruzelski regime, under continued Soviet pressure, believed that it could wait no longer to reinstitute order in Poland and seemed finally convinced that its security forces would perform reliably and that the populace would at least tolerate it. In many respects, the martial law decision represented a convergence of the Polish regime's will and the Soviet leadership's desires.

Soviet Pressure Begins

The first severe Soviet pressure began in November/December 1980 when Moscow seemed convinced that events were slipping beyond control of the Polish Government. The Soviets began plans for military intervention and offered their own plans for martial law at that time. Although Polish Party leader Kania was given a reprieve at the meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders in Moscow on 5 December, he was compelled by Soviet pressure to begin drawing up martial law plans with considerable Soviet advice and assistance. Kania nevertheless had pledged publicly not to use force and was opposed to implementation of the plan, apparently because he doubted the necessity and lacked confidence in its success.

The next major Soviet effort came in the March/April 1981 period during the turmoil following the Bydgozcz incident. Warsaw Pact Commander-in-Chief Kulikov and Chief of Staff

Gribkov arrived in Warsaw to exhort Kania to take firm measures against Solidarity and the Soviets extended the SOYUZ-81 maneuvers on Polish soil to intimidate the Poles. Throughout this period, Kulikov, Gribkov, and Shcheglov, the Warsaw Pact Representative in Warsaw, played a critical role in seeking to influence Polish military thinking. They met frequently with their Polish military counterparts exhorting them to act firmly and assessing the reliability of Polish forces. Soviet political officers exerted similar pressures on their counterparts.

Move To Oust Kania

Moscow was dissatisfied with Warsaw's failure to respond and decided that Kania had to be removed. In an effort to intimidate the Poles it sent Politburo ideologue Suslov to Warsaw in April to deliver a clear message of Moscow's dissatisfaction. In the late spring the Soviets moved to political action, supporting activities of hard-line Polish circles (the so-called Katowice forum) and backing an attempt to oust the Polish party chief at the June Polish Party plenum. The effort failed, but not by much.

Caught between this Soviet pressure and the continuing erosion of Party authority, the Polish Party leadership ousted Kania in October, replacing him with Premier Jaruzelski. Moscow's reaction to the change was muted publicly, but through its political and military leadership it continued to exert strong pressure on Jaruzelski personally to declare martial law. By November, a steady stream of Soviet military officials, led by Kulikov, was arriving in Warsaw, ostensibly to discuss Warsaw Pact matters but in reality exhorting him finally to institute the crackdown.

Jaruzelski's Decision

The mix of factors in Jaruzelski's final decision to take the plunge cannot be derived with certainty. He, as well as the Soviets, desired above all to maintain the primacy of the Communist leadership. He found himself increasingly having to share power with Solidarity and the Church--a situation distasteful to him and anathema to the Soviets. He apparently also felt that the high point of Solidarity's public support had passed, an opinion perhaps buttressed by the apathetic response to his forceful breaking of the firefighters' strike in Warsaw. Continued Soviet pressure may also have prompted him to believe that a forceful move was the last chance to avoid the Soviet military intervention which had been threatened explicitly and implicitly for the past year.

The Soviets certainly welcomed the decision and were informed of it beforehand. Marshal Kulikov arrived in Warsaw about a week before implementation and Soviet military officials clearly coordinated and followed each step. They certainly kept their principals in Moscow informed step-by-step. Nevertheless, the USSR has been able so far to stay in the background publicly and avoid taking the direct brunt of world opprobrium.